

COMMUNITY UPDATE

Rob McKenna
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King County
Council
District Six
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February, 2002

McKenna remains engaged in Sound Transit

For the past six years, I have served on the Sound Transit Board of Directors. During that time, I have worked hard to ensure that our public transportation resources are spent as efficiently as possible. My criticism of Sound Transit's light rail program has not been based on opposition to rail *per se* but on my conclusion that the "Link" plan is not a good transit investment in terms of the relatively small transit ridership it will generate. Many of my



The Eastside will see continued operation and expansion of the Regional Express Bus system which has been serving us since 1998 – beginning service more than 11 years before the new estimated light-rail start date in late 2009.

still to be done at Sound Transit, especially in terms of Phase II planning for the Eastside's Regional Express Bus system and HOV network.

I will continue to be engaged on Sound Transit matters, especially those which have an impact on East King County. In addition

to protecting Metro Transit's interests as a county councilmember, I will vigorously participate in the Trans-Lake Washington and I-405 corridor processes, both of which will entail major new bus transit investments. Furthermore, I will use my position as state Transportation Improvement Board chair to promote increased funding for roads and highways at both the regional and statewide levels.

concerns regarding light rail cost estimates and ridership projections have proven correct. I believe that my criticism has helped shaped a new light rail proposal that, at least, will not bankrupt our region.

Despite my efforts at due diligence as a Sound Transit Board member, however, and despite the fact that 15 Eastside cities and towns urged my reappointment to the Board, King County Executive Ron Sims chose to replace me. I am disappointed because I believe that there is much work

to protecting Metro Transit's interests as a county councilmember, I will vigorously participate in the Trans-Lake Washington and I-405 corridor processes, both of which will entail major new bus transit investments. Furthermore, I will use my position as state Transportation Improvement Board chair to promote increased funding for roads and highways at both the regional and statewide levels.

During 2002, Sound Transit will complete work on a new transit center in downtown Bellevue, continue construction of the new Overlake Transit Center, and begin the first phases of the Bellevue Downtown Access Project. On Mercer Island, a final decision should be reached on how to improve transit operations in the center lanes without having an adverse impact on HOV lane users or Mercer Island residents, and without increasing congestion in the outer general-purpose lanes. In Renton, we are moving closer and closer to building the Park Street direct access ramps promised in the Sound Move Plan. And throughout the Eastside, we will continue to operate and expand the Regional Express Bus system which has been serving us since 1998 – beginning service more than 11 years before the new estimated light-rail start date in late 2009.

As Eastsiders, we should be pleased with what we have accomplished with Sound Transit resources on the Eastside. I will continue to do everything I can to ensure that your transit tax dollars are invested in ways that move the most people at the least cost. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have concerns or questions regarding Sound Transit, Metro Transit or other public transportation issues.

Thank you,

Rob McKenna
Rob McKenna

King County Budget "ugly scramble" for money

The good, the bad and the ugly of King County government were all on display during the last two months of 2001. Unfortunately, there was far more of the latter than the former.

In late November the majority of the County Council adopted a 2002 budget that shortchanges the most important responsibility of county government — public safety. The budget, written by Councilmembers Jane Hague and Larry Phillips, was also used as a political weapon to punish suburban voters for their support of Initiative 747.

An *Eastside Journal* editorial published on Nov. 21 aptly described the situation: "After what occurred this week, voters and taxpayers can see it [the county's budget process] for what it really is: an ugly scramble for power over your money." As one of the five Councilmembers who voted "No" on the budget, I am writing today to explain why I couldn't support a budget that was bad and a process that was ugly.

The Good

The best news to come out of King County government in recent history has been the remarkable work performed by County Sheriff Dave Reichert and his outstanding team of detectives and officers who never gave up in their attempt to solve the Green River murder cases.

Ironically, the Sheriff's budget was one of the victims of the 2002 adopted budget. At the last minute, hundreds of thousands of dollars were cut from the Sheriff's Office to fund arts programs, public housing and county employee cell phone use.

One of the few bright spots from the entire budget process was the fact that the county took its smallest property tax increase in more than a quarter century. Before I came to the County Council in 1996 it had been the policy of the County Executive to request the maximum property tax revenue increase allowed under state law, typically more than eight percent per year.

The Bad

Angered that suburban voters had supported Initiative 747, the Council Majority cut funding for the County Sheriff, the County Prosecutor and the County District Courts. Then the Council Majority turned around and took the money that was cut from

public safety and gave an additional \$300,000 to the arts, an additional \$304,000 for public housing and added \$136,000 for county employee cell phone use.

The majority's suggestion that I-747 forced public safety cuts is ridiculous. I-747 cost the county less than \$2 million out of a current expense fund budget of approximately \$500 million. That works out to about four-tenths of one percent. As County Sheriff Dave Reichert pointed out, the Council Majority stole money from the Sheriff's budget to pay for other things. Initiative 747 was simply used as an excuse.

The Ugly

Even more appalling than the skewed sense of priorities contained in the budget written by Councilmembers Hague and Phillips were the strong-arm tactics they used to gain support for their budget. Councilmembers were told that they either would support the Hague/Phillips tax and fee increases for surface water management and noxious weed control — or else the "special programs" funding for the low-income and elderly residents of their district would be terminated.

Traditionally, special programs funding was divided up equally by council districts, with all Seattle districts and all suburban districts receiving the same amount of funding. This year the Council Majority used special programs funding as a weapon to punish five suburban districts.

Among the local human services agencies which did not receive special programs funding were the Eastside Domestic Violence Program, the King County Sexual Assault Resource Center and Washington Women in Need. As the *Eastside Journal* pointed out in an editorial published on December 19, the authors of the county budget "can't defend using political extortion on fiscal or moral grounds."

There are many on the Council who believe that the solution to all of our budget challenges is to simply raise property taxes and other taxes more often. I don't consider that an acceptable option.

I believe the ultimate solution is for county government to become smarter and more efficient, and to prioritize spending on our most important responsibilities. Only then will the good in county government drive out the bad and the ugly.

"...voters and taxpayers can see [the county's budget process] for what it really is: an ugly scramble for power over your money."

Historic Forest Lands Acquisition

About two years ago, I co-founded the Evergreen Forest Trust, an innovative non-profit conservation company. As you may have read, the Evergreen Forest Trust has purchased from Weyerhaeuser 100,000 acres of forest land known as the Snoqualmie Tree Farm, in the Cascade foothills of eastern King and southern Snohomish counties.

We believe this acquisition is the largest private land conservation effort in U.S. history. It will protect this vast area from suburban sprawl in perpetuity. This transaction employs a new method

of financing conservation—the issuance of tax-exempt revenue bonds backed by timber proceeds.

I want to highlight the tireless work and support of Representative Jennifer Dunn, for all her efforts to make this acquisition a reality by introducing legislation to permit the use of tax-exempt financing. Ultimately, the success of this transaction can be attributed to the partnership of conservation groups, Weyerhaeuser and government. Together we share a vision of a new model for forest conservation - **Rob McKenna**

EASTSIDE JOURNAL - OUR VIEW

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Forest deal protects trees and our future

Look east from any high point around here and you'll see a green carpet stretching into the Cascade foothills. Thanks to a breathtaking and innovative idea, that view should be permanent.

The Evergreen Forest Trust wants to use tax-free bonds to buy this 100,000 acres of forest land from Weyerhaeuser for \$185 million and maintain it, as is, forever. The deal will prevent future housing development, but allow logging and public use on most of the land.

This deal is a "win" for just about everyone. Government officials need only to tweak federal tax laws to make this a reality.

The area, now called the Snoqualmie Tree Farm, is huge. The land is north of the towns of Snoqualmie and North Bend and east of Carnation and stretches north into Snohomish County and east to the boundary of the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest. It is twice the size of Seattle.

The benefit to the public is obvious. By maintaining it as a tree farm, we will continue to see trees, not houses, when we look east. The deal also adds additional pro-

tection to about 20 percent of the property by closing off logging near streams and wetlands.

Weyerhaeuser has allowed the public to use the area for hunting, fishing and hiking. Those uses will continue. So, too, will logging, though at a lower level.

That commercial use is important. As a tree farm, the land will continue on the tax rolls, just as it is under Weyerhaeuser ownership. The only difference is that the land near streams and wetlands will be off-limits to any commercial use. We're willing to trade the limited loss of that tax revenue for the benefit of preserving all 100,000 acres.

Credit for this bold approach to preservation goes to a number of business, environment and government leaders.

Sen. Patty Murray and Rep. Jennifer Dunn are moving the project through the red tape of Washington, D.C. Rob McKenna and Larry Phillips have lent their County Council clout to the effort here. Credit also goes to Weyerhaeuser and the Cascade Land Conservancy for making negotiations successful and the

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THE EASTSIDE JOURNAL - OUR VIEW

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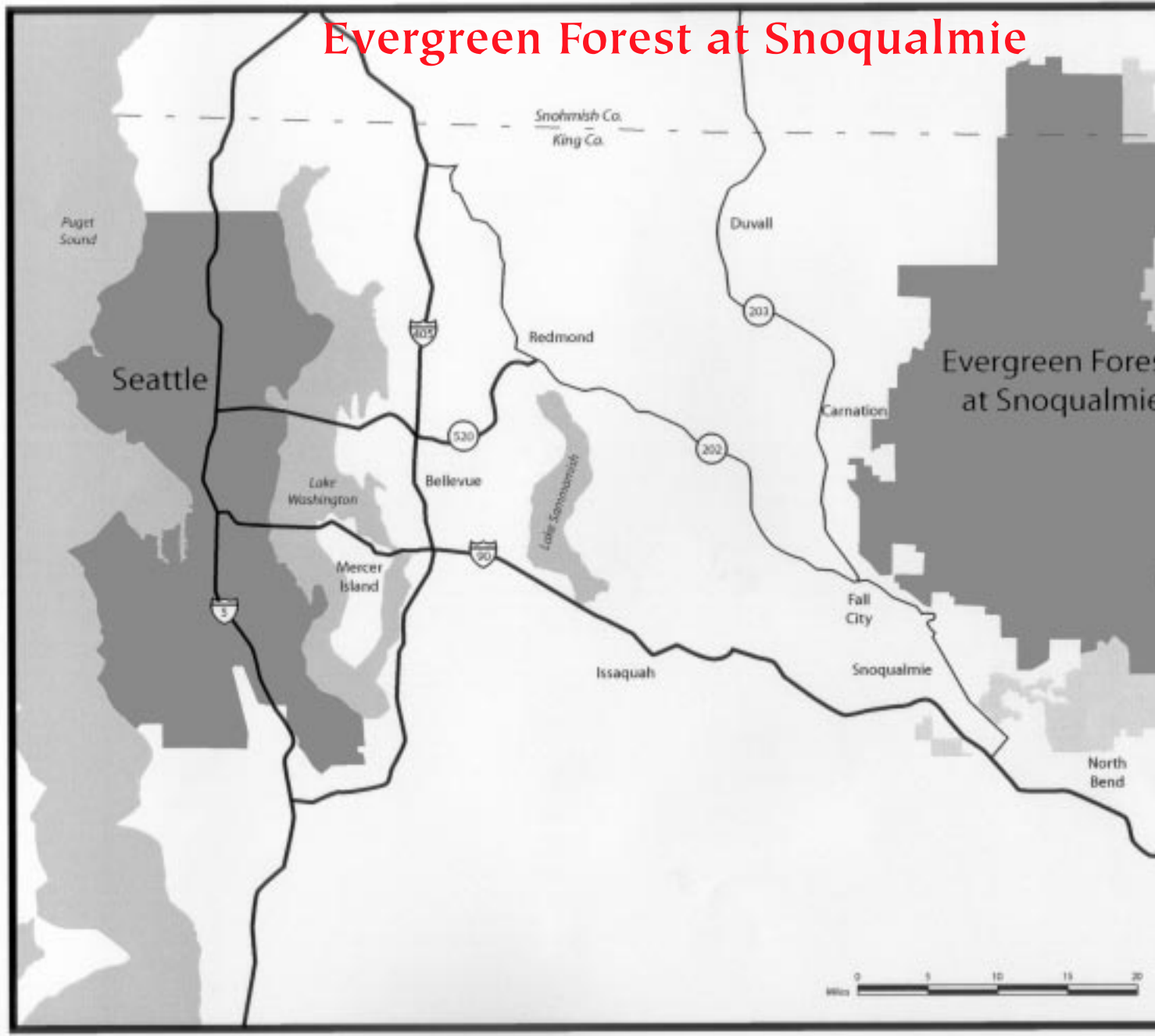
leaders of the Evergreen Forest Trust, who are putting their considerable expertise into this effort.

There are two downsides. Weyerhaeuser will lay off about 60 workers from its tree farm, but since

the area will continue to be logged, some of those workers could be picked up by other companies. Unfortunately, there will be a lag between the layoffs and new employment.

Also, the area will be off-limits to housing

development. However, the situation now as court only one house per 80 acres are building elsewhere can change, putting the land in a different category. The state guarantees that the only spruce-fir forest in the future will be those carp



THE SEATTLE TIMES

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Huge deal may save forest from sprawl *\$185 million purchase depends on novel financing*

By ERIC PRYNE

Seattle Times staff reporter

A new, nonprofit land trust has struck a tentative deal to buy Weyerhaeuser's 100,000-acre Snoqualmie Tree Farm in the Cascade foothills, which would preclude any possibility of suburban development.

The agreement, announced yesterday, may be the biggest nongovernment land-conservation initiative in the state's history. "I can't think of one that's larger," said veteran Sierra Club leader Charlie Raines.

The tree farm is nearly twice as large as the city of Seattle.

Its prospective buyer, the Evergreen Forest Trust, would pay Weyerhaeuser \$185 million. But the deal hinges on government approval of a financing tool that never has been tried.

The trust said it would continue to manage most of the land as a working forest. But it said logging would be prohibited or strictly limited on about 20 percent of the property to protect streams, wetlands and wildlife, and overall timber harvest is expected to drop.

Weyerhaeuser already has halted logging on the forest, and yesterday the company laid off 60 workers.

Trust leaders, environmentalists and elected officials said the forest, to be called the Evergreen Forest at Snoqualmie, would serve as a wall against sprawl. "Its western edge is literally the eastern edge of developed King County," said Seattle attorney Gerry Johnson, the trust's president.

King County has zoned the land for forestry and al-

lows no new lots smaller than 80 acres. But supporters of the deal said development pressure will only increase; there's already a market for 80-acre estates; and acquisition is the only sure way to prevent it.

"Zoning isn't permanent," said Metropolitan King County Councilman Rob McKenna, R-Bellevue, a member of the new trust's board.

The transaction is contingent on the trust obtaining financing, which it plans to get by selling tax-exempt revenue bonds backed by logging proceeds. That, in turn, is contingent on Internal Revenue Service approval of the novel approach.

Johnson said the trust plans to request a ruling from the IRS next week. In addition, U.S. Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., and U.S. Rep. Jennifer Dunn, R-Bellevue, have introduced legislation to amend the tax code to explicitly authorize such financing.

The bill already has cleared the Senate.

If the financing mechanism works here, Johnson said, it could provide a new model for forest protection nationwide.

Weyerhaeuser's ownership of parts of the Snoqualmie Tree Farm dates to 1900. Richard Hanson, the company's senior vice president of timberlands, called it "some of the best tree-growing land in the Northwest."

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THE SEATTLE TIMES

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But company spokesman Frank Mendizabal said development pressures and environmental regulations, including the Endangered Species Act, made it increasingly difficult for Weyerhaeuser to manage the land as a commercial forest. Chinook salmon, a threatened species, spawn in the forest's streams.

If the deal goes through, here's how the land would be managed:

Subdivisions and other development would be prohibited on all 100,000 acres through a conservation easement. Management of about 20,000 acres would be turned over to the Cascade Land Conservancy, a Seattle-based land-conservation group that helped form the new trust.

Additional restrictions would apply on those lands. Land Conservancy President Gene Duvernoy, who also serves on the trust's board, said logging on 10,000 acres he called "the most critical ecological lands" would be prohibited unless deemed environmentally beneficial. Logging also would be limited on lands visible from the Snoqualmie Valley.

Another 10,000 acres along streams would be protected in buffers that would be both wider and more restrictive than state logging regulations require, Duvernoy said.

The remainder of the forest would be managed for timber production by the Campbell Group, a Portland-based timberland company that already controls 500,000 acres in Western Washington.

Campbell President Stan Renecker said less timber probably will be harvested than under Weyerhaeuser's ownership, because more land is off-limits and because the trust would need enough revenue only to pay its expenses and bondholders, not to make a profit.

Weyerhaeuser would retain ownership of about 5,000 acres, most of it containing potential gravel resources.

But Duvernoy said Evergreen would hold the timber rights. And Mendizabal said Weyerhaeuser has no plans to mine the gravel soon.

The deal has been in the works for years. Duvernoy said a San Francisco-based financial- and forest-services firm first approached him with the idea of using tax-exempt revenue bonds to protect forests in 1995.

In 2000, over Weyerhaeuser's objections, King County Executive Ron Sims proposed additional restrictions on creating new lots in forestry zones. Sims unexpectedly withdrew that proposal a year ago but wouldn't say why.

His spokeswoman, Elaine Kraft, said yesterday that Sims' move was a show of good faith to Weyerhaeuser as the Snoqualmie negotiations heated up.

Some environmentalists hailed the proposal yesterday. "It sounds very visionary," said Kurt Beardslee of Washington Trout, a Duvall-based fish-protection organization.

The 60 Weyerhaeuser workers who lost their jobs as a result of the deal will receive pay and benefits for 60 days and help finding new jobs, Mendizabal said. Renecker of the Campbell Group said his firm probably would add employees to manage the forest.

Eric Pryne can be reached at 206-464-2231 or epryne@seattletimes.com.



Councilmember Rob McKenna recognized the Bellevue High School girls swim team for their first place finish at the state championships.

Redistricting Produces Changes to District 6 Boundaries

Last December, the County Council adopted the 2001 King County Districting Committee's changes to the 13 council districts' boundaries. Each district now contains about 135,000 residents.

Significant changes to the Sixth District's boundaries included the addition of those parts of Bellevue south of I-90 which were not already in the district; the inclusion of all of Newcastle; and the addition of Bellevue precincts around Bellevue Community college, in the newly annexed West Lake Sammamish area and between Phantom Lake and I-90. Most of the Kenndale area of Renton and several precincts in south Renton have been shifted into the Fifth District, represented by Councilmember Dwight Pelz.

I look forward to continuing to represent those areas that were already in the Sixth District, and welcome the opportunity to serve the Bellevue and Newcastle residents who are now within the District's boundaries. They will receive a special mailing from my office later this winter.

For more information on the District's boundaries, please see the Council's website at

Retired Metro Vans fill needs of community organizations

Each year, the Metropolitan King County Council provides non-profit organizations the opportunity to apply for retired Metro Transit vanpool vans. Metro Transit has the most successful vanpool program in the nation. We retire a significant number of vans every year that are too old for the heavy use that vanpools require. But they still have enough useful life to meet the relatively lighter demands of non-profit organizations serving youth, seniors and the disabled.

Several years ago, we began searching for ways to cope with the high cost of providing curb-to-curb paratransit service for the elderly and disabled. The council found that one way to address the spiraling cost of paratransit service was to provide retired vans to community-based organizations whose clients are heavy users of that service.

For 2001, two non-profit organizations in District Six received surplus Metro vans: the **Bellevue Boy's and Girls Club** and the **Bellevue Community College Childcare Program**. Examples of past recipients include the **Renton Senior Center**, the **Stroum Community Center**, **Lake Heights YMCA** and **Skiforall**, an organization which provides recreational opportunities for the disabled.

For the modest cost of donating these vans, we know that they are making a big difference to community based non-profit organizations and saving the county hundreds of thousands of dollars in paratransit costs.



Councilmember McKenna presents to Doug Wozeniak, Director of Operations of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Bellevue the keys to a retired Metro van.

**Rob McKenna**

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Important community update

Town Meetings...

Metropolitan King County Councilman Rob McKenna invites you to discuss important issues affecting our community:

Saturday, February 23, 2002

10:00 a.m. to noon

Bellevue City Hall
11511 Main Street
Bellevue, WA

or

1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Fire Station 14
1900 Lind Avenue SW
Renton, WA

District Six Staff Changes

Our long-time Legislative Aide **Sandy Van Luven** has left to join her new husband Dan Hinmon in McMinnville, Oregon. Those of you who have contacted our office regarding parks, open space, the arts or human services probably spoke with Sandy at one time or another, or met her in person. Sandy also assisted me in forming the Coal Creek Coalition and worked on the aircraft noise issue.

We will miss Sandy greatly and know she can't really be replaced. At the same time, we have welcomed our newest staff member, **Hunter Goodman**. A graduate of U.S.C. and the Seattle University Law School, Hunter's most recent position was with the Washington Policy Center - a public policy think tank here in Seattle. As of January 15, he can be reached at (206) 296-1634.

Suellen Roche will continue to act as my administrative assistant and first line of contact for constituent inquiries; her number is (206) 296-1006. Washington State Representative **Luke Esser** serves as my Policy Director and is responsible for budget, growth management, and law & justice issues. When not representing the 48th Legislative District in Olympia, he can be reached at (206) 296-0363.

Chief of Staff **Chris Johnson** keeps the office running smoothly and continues to handle the wide range of transportation issues with which I am involved. If you have a concern regarding Metro bus service, Sound Transit, county roads, Boeing Field or the state Transportation Improvement Board, call him at (206) 296-0362.